

## Minutes from NEENP strategic planning workshop

17<sup>th</sup> January 2019, 2pm

### Northumbria University

**Chair:** Alister Scott

**Facilitator:** Jim Cokill

#### Attendees

Alister Scott – Northumbria Uni  
Jude Leitch – Northumberland  
Tourism

David Feige – Northumberland  
Council

Neil Wilkinson – Gateshead  
Council

Charles Sellers – Guest of Mike Pratt

Graeme Warren – EA

Glyn Bateman – Natural England

Steve Bhowmick – Durham County  
Council

Mike Pratt – Northumberland  
Wildlife Trust

Jim Cokill- Durham Wildlife Trust

Michelle Mancini – Public health  
England

Justin Hancock – Banks Group

Claire Thompson – Capability  
North East

#### Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all attendees, specifically new and guest attendees:

Justin Hancock, representing Banks Group in place of Philip Baker. Specifically interested in restoration and enhancement of habitats and use of green infrastructure in developments.

Michelle Mancini, Public Health England and representing Alice Wiseman, Gateshead Director of Public Health on behalf of the regional Directors of Public Health. Interest in the how the natural environment can help to deliver health benefits and address inequalities.

Charles Sellers, Innovation and Business Advisor an interest in green infrastructure and the benefits it brings to communities.

Apologies received in advance from those who were unable to attend and noted on the attendee list.

Purpose of today is to see how the work of the NEENP can further link to national and local agendas more closely. The NEENP 20 year Vision for Environmental Growth was created in advance of Defra's 25 Year Environmental Plan. There are strong similarities to the NEENP Vision and the content of these other plans and strategies (natural capital, sustainability, low carbon, outdoor learning) and so work should focus on clear linkages and references (request the same in return) and tweaks where needed, such as the NEENP Vision becoming at 25 year one.

#### Review of NEENP materials, progress and 2018 survey

Overview of materials available to NEENP executive and partners. The brand and themes were developed following consultations and workshops in 2017 and 2018 with the NEENP executive and wider partners. The intention was to take the [large remit](#) given from Defra, distil the messages about the purpose of Local Nature Partnerships and create work themes for projects (ours and partners) to be badge under as not every aspect of NEENP work is relevant or of interest to

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everyone. Individual projects are then delivered by partners via task and finish groups led by an executive member under the relevant theme. For example, the work with Gateshead Public Health team on green infrastructure and obesity is part of our Naturally Healthy theme, led by David Gardiner for the guide and Neil Wilkinson for the Naturally Healthy by Design event.

A key message from the consultation was to make it easy to find the topic that is relevant to partners e.g. learning, health. When promoting the work of the NEENP, the vision, themes and branding are always well received, we need a strong plan to do more with them, promote and use in our own organisations and link to other strategies related to our work themes. This is important as wider partners didn't want the environment sector morphing into the economic or education sector but that synergies are reflected in our work and plans so that the opportunities for collaboration can be seen and delivered. The NEENP work with the health sector is a good example of this in action however for other sectors we have been a little ahead of the curve and are revisiting key topics or ways of working (forestry hub, natural capital investment mapping).

Examples of how the vision should be used:

- 1) A partner writing a project bid for a natural heritage project and referring to the NEENP Vision and identifying which of the themes their work will contribute to. The HLF look to the advice of the Local Nature Partnerships and would look favourably on a project that combines these messages.
- 2) Badging a specific project as an NEENP theme. For example, Gateshead health, planning and environment event.
- 3) NEENP Vision for Environmental Growth referred to in Local Plans or Clean Growth Strategies and its links to health, economic, environmental and education agendas. This draws the attention of many of those in partner organisations and flags its existence to developers, architects and consultants and raising the profile, ambitions and aims of the partnership. Cross sector working with other departments would have been needed to identify the synergies and what should be the focus. This activity would also allow a new narrative for the environment to be established with colleagues in other departments supporting the transition of the environment as a nice to have to an essential to have. In addition, there is evidence to suggest the planning inspectorate looks favourable on the inclusion and Local Nature Partnerships.
- 4) A specific NEENP lead and funded project such as bring the Elected Members Guide to life in local communities.

Key documents and digital communications include:

- [Vision for Environmental Growth](#)
- About your NEENP
- Environmental Indicators
- Series of landscape and habitats maps and documents
- Landscape partnership projects and map
- [neenp.org.uk](https://neenp.org.uk) – contains information about LNPS, our journey, ambitions, Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding
- Social media – Twitter and Facebook
- [Elected Members Guide](#)
- Terms of reference and Memorandum of Understanding
- Capability North East documents

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The NEENP has constantly evolved and it seems it has reached another juncture that requires reflection on how the agreed governance is better implemented and our messages and work shared and promoted. The partnership is aware of gaps in representation however having a clear vision, messages and opportunities/ reasons to engage were needed before approaching others. There is consensus that the partnership would benefit from more representation from the rural, education, community and business sectors.

The NEENP has strength in bringing together different sectors and groups to progress ideas and projects demonstrated by Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnerships, the creation of Visions for partners work (River Don Vision) and health messaging. In other areas we have initiated conversations, admittedly in times before wider partners and others had considered these topics (forestry hub, natural capital mapping and investments) and encouraged all to look to what is on the horizon, think differently and consider the environment in a whole systems approach, that considers who and what it interacts with at a given point and what is the opportunity. A lack of resources meant that we were unable to drive some of these opportunities further and other areas of the country have now taken the lead, however the local opportunity is now reappearing. In these instances, it is vital that executive members champion the NEENPs horizon scanning role and how they can contribute to these topics now.

### **Vision and Mission discussions**

1. Do more on bringing people together and in an integrated way – Such as IAMP, health and council agendas.
2. Are we reacting or leading – what is our exact role? The NEENP is to show leadership, not duplicate what is happening now but sign post the way to how the environment will be managed in the future helping our partners to prepare.
3. Discussions on switching the mission and vision as some in the executive felt there were the wrong way around and make some tweaks. Highlighted that they had been switched at executive request approximately 18 months ago.
  1. Vision – more of leading, directing and coordinating role, suggested edits below.
    - A thriving and valued natural environment for a healthier and wealthier North East England for all.
  2. Mission – is how we will do it and enable others to do, suggested edits below.
    - Our mission is to lead, coordinate and prioritise effective actions to benefit nature, people and the economy which add value to achieve Environmental Growth

### **Survey**

Summary of observations and comments from the survey. The original summary was sent out with workshop papers.

- 1) Representation:** More from other sectors to link with other agendas and strategies. Need to ensure the NEENP is a standing agenda item for other partnerships such as the Heads of Planning, Local Enterprise Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- 2) Priorities:** Climate Change, Environmental Growth via natural capital, planning and biodiversity net gain focus, health and adapting the Elected Members Guide to other audiences.

- 3) **Communications:** Key messages are good, ;[ and the themes support local delivery of the 25 YEP. Workshops and event are good overall, weakness is frequency. Need to raise profile, a Chair is key to this as is more with social media. Executive feel that they haven't included and shared the work of the partnership and its vision enough.
- 4) **Strengths and weaknesses:** The NEENP has always been under funded and so focus is on maintaining partnership rather than delivering our ambitions. Lack of a Chair reduces the volume and coverage of our call to actions and results in a limited profile. Not always inclusive enough to all partners at meetings.  
Strengths include strategic overview and resourcefulness. Breaking out of the environment bubble and working to become self sufficient. Networks and the commitment of staff.
- 5) **What should the NEENP do more of?**  
Executive need to define their roles and expected outcomes as per ToFR. Influencing others to deliver NEENP vision and agenda. Promote the NEENP, its role, work and create opportunities for it.
- 6) **What the NEENP do less of?**  
Focusing on its survival. Less inconclusive meetings. Don't do too much.

### Discussion observations

The NEENP has worked closely with health and produced good work, change and raised the NEENP's profile with the health sector. Share this as a case study, focusing how the NEENP, Gateshead Council and Public Health England have approached this collaboration.

What are the gaps where the NEENP can add value with consensus on the following?

- Natural capital, the NEENP need to understand what lead role they can take. It is central to what we do and need to have opportunity and support to put great plans and proposals into action.
- There is much to develop with health and planning supported by government initiatives and need to agree a method of these to be cascaded effectively with the multiple benefits of nature recognised.
- Need to find the right language to use, the NEENP discussed the Nature of Words project perhaps this can be the first project of bringing the guide to life.
- Website videos and case studies of successes, experiences and create a narrative.
- 2019 business plan to be developed what will the partnership look like in 5 years.
- Work of partnership must support Capability North East as its success will help to give the sector a bigger voice with decision makers. Executive need to feel more confident in talking about this work and act as a sales agent/. Should form part of a workshop of next executive meeting.
- Clarity on priorities as this will then lead onto grant opportunities. However, the NEENP is there to set the ambition and framework for partners to deliver via their organisations and so partners also need to look for those opportunities as the NEENP can't survive by living project to project and this is not showing strategic leadership for the benefit of the environment, people and economy.

### Actions

1. Review Mission and Vision and consider reversing and accepting edits proposed in text above – **ALL**.

2. Need to develop priorities that support and compliment Capability North East - ?
  - a. Thematically
  - b. Commercially with our peers – LNPs offer to Defra
  - c. Act as sales agents for CNE
3. Influence SEP and industrial strategy – **Chair and Local Authority partners**
  - a. Note: The NEENP has always attempted to link with the work of the LEP however their focus has been entirely on their agenda. Several meetings have been held and papers produced proposing with the support of the LEP to develop the forestry sector via a forestry hub, all infrastructure mapping (as per Manchester example) back in 2016, using the planning system to ensure Enterprise Zones deliver for biodiversity, making the case for a greener economy and other examples. Government initiatives have raised the importance of place to a successful economy and natural capital is growing in profile. What is important going forward is that the NEENP’s role in raising these topics and developing collaborative suggestions on how to develop them are acknowledged and partners push for the NEENP’s place at the table. Claire Thompson is currently in discussions with the LEP re: all infrastructure mapping as we had liaised with the Manchester team on development and costings and have a decent understanding of how to progress this. Please contact her to be involved in this work.
  - b. Local Nature Partnerships are being tasked by Defra to review Local Industrial Strategies, this will apply to LEPs and local authorities. NEENP needs to agree a process and methodology to do this, ideally in advance of the plans being finalised. We did highlight the sections of the LIS and Clean Growth Strategies that are relevant to the NEENP for partners to raise and include within the organisations.
  - c. Explore Environmental Value Added as a metric to show contribution and value, can this be displayed as a map and linked with natural capital work – **GW**.
4. Meetings with the LEP Chair Andrew Hodgson or Helen Golightly – **JL**.
5. Agreement of metrics and better understating by the executive group of natural capital as a whole topic to bring the Natural Capital agenda forward – **AScott**.
6. Identify team skills again, where they can be deployed and where we have gaps – Executive to supply to Claire following the meeting – **Exec & CT**. See below for a summary of this information.
7. Heads of planning, this is a sectoral voice and need follow up on this – **SB**.
8. Provide Claire with you social media account details to ensure that all partners are linked into our communications – **All**.
9. Developed case studies and examples, with support from university students – **CT & NW**.
  - a. Stories, narratives and videos
  - b. Executive to participate in videos

Name	Organisation	Area of interest/ task and finish group lead	NEENP theme
Steve Bhowmick	Durham County Council	Natural Capital Strategy	Economy with Ecology
Ian Brown	Forestry Commission	Rural economy	Economy with Ecology Landscapes & nature

Jude Leitch	Northumberland Tourism	Tourism	Economy with Ecology
Mike Pratt	Northumberland Wildlife Trust	Woodlands and forestry	Landscapes & Nature Economy with Ecology
Andy Smith	Intimation Design	Communications and engagement	NEENP Vision for Environmental Growth
Alister Scott	Northumbria Uni		
Neil Wilkinson	Gateshead Council	Blue and green infrastructure and health	Naturally Healthy
	Responses still to be received from some of the executive		